

Estimated Incidence/Prevalence in US:

- average adult has 2-4 colds/year
- average schoolchild has 6-10 colds/year

Causes:

- multiple viruses – #1 rhinovirus – identified in acute URI
- no infectious agent identified in 1/2 of patients with acute URI symptoms

Likely risk factors:

- higher levels of stress, negative affect, anxiety, depression & negative life events may affect susceptibility to or outcome of acute URI
- exposure to young children (for example, in day care)
- shorter sleep duration & poor sleep in weeks prior to rhinovirus exposure
- exposure to tobacco smoke may be a risk factor but data limited and inconsistent

Protective factors

- physical activity, especially if over 50

Course of illness

- initial symptoms typically sore throat, malaise, low-grade fever
- typical presenting symptoms of nasal congestion, rhinorrhea, cough appear in first 24-48 hours
- duration of symptoms
 - usually peak at days 3-4
 - resolve or significantly improve by day 7
 - usually last 1-2 weeks, but may be > 3 weeks
 - common cold often lasts > 10 days
- concern for more than just cold if
 - fever \geq 3 days
 - symptoms worsen after 3-5 days or new symptoms appear
 - symptoms have not improved after 7-10 days in infants & children and after 14 days in adults

Recommended Treatment by symptom:Muscle Aches

- NSAIDs may reduce discomfort or pain caused by common cold

Cough

- FDA recommends against use of nonprescription cough and cold products in children < 2 years old and supports not using them in children < 4 years old
- Honey may reduce nocturnal cough and sleep disruption in children with acute cough, and might be more effective than dextromethorphan or diphenhydramine
 - 2.5ml qhs in study
 - remember not in kids < 1 yr old
- American College of Chest Physicians recommendations suggest benefit with
 - brompheniramine plus sustained-release pseudoephedrine (a first-generation antihistamine/decongestant preparation) (ACCP Grade A)
 - naproxen (ACCP Grade A)
 - or ipratropium bromide via oral inhalation (ACCP Grade A)
 - AND recommends against cough suppressants (ACCP Grade D) and albuterol if no asthma

Congestion

- intranasal corticosteroids do not appear effective for reducing symptoms
- decongestants (nasal or oral) appear moderately effective for short term relief of congestion
- remember avoid oral for pregnant women esp in 1st trimester, but altogether if you can; nasal OK

Rhinorrhea

- ipratropium nasal spray (Atrovent Nasal Spray) may improve rhinorrhea but not nasal congestion (level 2 [mid-level] evidence)
- heated, humidified air might be beneficial but evidence limited (level 2 [mid-level] evidence)
- isotonic saline nasal wash may reduce symptoms, medication use and school absence in children with presumed infectious rhinitis (level 2 [mid-level] evidence) but hypertonic saline nasal spray does not appear to reduce symptoms or illness duration in adults (level 2 [mid-level] evidence)

Antibiotics

- do not appear effective in reducing symptoms of common cold or acute purulent rhinitis (level 2 [mid-level] evidence)
- receiving information/reassurance more strongly associated with patient satisfaction than receiving antibiotics (level 2 [mid-level] evidence)

Shorten Duration

- Pelargonium sidoides - Umcka ColdCare (sold in this country – \$12 for tx for 1 cold)
 - Extract hastens resolution of common cold symptoms (level 1 [likely reliable] evidence)
- Andrographis paniculata - KalmCold and Kan Jang tablets (could not find for sale in this country)
 - reduces common cold symptoms in adults (level 1 [likely reliable] evidence)
- echinacea preparations may reduce duration of colds (level 2 [mid-level] evidence), but insufficient evidence to recommend specific products
- vitamin C at onset of cold symptoms does not appear to reduce duration or severity of common cold (level 2 [mid-level] evidence)
- zinc preparations (oral or intranasal) have inconsistent evidence for efficacy and intranasal zinc may result in loss of smell; not recommended (ACCP Grade D)
- Airborne dietary supplement not recommended for prevention or treatment of colds
 - no conclusive evidence of benefit, safety not established
 - adult tablet contains vitamin C 1 g and use as directed (every 3 hours) may increase risk for kidney stones
- Humidified air:
 - heated, humidified air may improve persistent symptoms in patients with common cold (level 2 [mid-level] evidence)
- Chicken soup:
 - sipping hot water or hot chicken soup reported to increase nasal mucus velocity (level 3 [lacking direct] evidence)

- all values returned to baseline at 30 minutes & no significant differences in nasal airflow resistance